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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 ASTANA 002147

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SUBJECT: KAZAKHSTAN: FM TAZHIN REAFFIRMS MADRID  
COMMITMENTS

Classified By: Ambassador Richard Hoagland, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During an October 29 meeting with the  
Ambassador, Foreign Minister Tazhin:

-- reaffirmed Kazakhstan's commitment to fulfilling its  
Madrid commitments;

-- made a case for building a more mature bilateral  
relationship by noting his government's desire to be released  
from the requirements of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and  
Human Rights Certification, and its desire to have President  
Bush visit before he leaves office;

-- restated Kazakhstan's continued interest in playing a more  
active role in Afghanistan, including through its 2010 OSCE  
chairmanship;

-- predicted no surprises at the October 30 Shanghai  
Cooperation Organization's prime ministerial meeting in  
Astana;

-- explained Prime Minister's Karim Masimov had postponed his  
planned visit to Kabul because of the global financial  
crisis;

-- expressed pleasure at President Bush's letter of thanks to  
President Nazarbayev for Kazakhstan's just concluded  
2003-2008 contribution of troops to the coalition forces in  
Iraq; and

-- took note when the Ambassador urged that parliament ratify  
the Cooperative Threat Reduction Umbrella Agreement by  
December 13. END SUMMARY.

MADRID COMMITMENTS

¶2. (C) During their initial business meeting following the  
Ambassador's presentation of credentials, the Ambassador  
reminded Foreign Minister Marat Tazhin of Washington's

high-level attention to Kazakhstan fulfilling its OSCE-related Madrid commitments before the end of this calendar year. He suggested successful fulfillment would enhance President Nursultan Nazarbayev's status as a statesman and would help reduce international criticism of Kazakhstan often seen in the mass media. Tazhin said he agreed "100%, even 200%," and noted the required legislation is moving forward. He said the government had already prepared a draft mass-media law and would present it to parliament "in the nearest time." This law, which Tazhin had already signed off on, will ease registration requirements for media outlets, decrease the grounds under which the government can shut them down, and "eliminate other bureaucratic idiocies." Tazhin assured the Ambassador draft election and political party laws would go to parliament in November or December. All three laws will represent steps forward on liberalization, though will not go as far as he personally would like, Tazhin admitted. He noted he himself is an adherent of "serious liberalization and broadening of civil society," which he believes is a strong guarantee of stability and national security. He said, "A government that is too tightly controlled will eventually collapse." He added that the general view in the Kazakhstani leadership is that the pace of liberalization has to be calibrated to the realities (both objective facts and political mentality) of the country. In response to a question about the role of OSCE'S ODIHR in reviewing the draft legislation, Tazhin replied there has been regular contact and consultation.

13. (C) COMMENT: Tazhin is one of the leading voices in the

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government of Kazakhstan for democratic progress toward Western standards -- but he is not the only voice. Among the competing voices are those of the old guard from the former Soviet system as well as those susceptible to the Kremlin's noise about the danger of "color revolutions." We probably should not expect 100% fulfillment of our expectations about the Madrid commitments, but we do need to be able to say that Kazakhstan has made a good-faith effort and has moved forward. END COMMENT.

#### TAZHIN'S THREE TALKING POINTS

14. (C) The foreign minister raised three points: his government's desire to be released from the Jackson-Vanik Amendment and Human Rights Certification, and its desire to welcome a visit by President Bush before he leaves office.

15. (C) JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT. Tazhin reminded the Ambassador that during a meeting on the margins of UNGA, he had raised with Secretary of State Rice Kazakhstan's strong interest in "graduating" from the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. The Kazakhstan Embassy in Washington has initiated discussions with Congress. Tazhin recognized that this is not within the State Department's direct purview, but asked for assistance from State in making Kazakhstan's case with the Hill. The Ambassador explained that concluding a bilateral WTO accession agreement would go a long way toward removing the barriers to lifting Jackson-Vanik. He reminded Tazhin a window of opportunity exists now for progress in the WTO accession negotiations and urged Kazakhstan to take advantage of this opening.

16. (C) HUMAN RIGHTS CERTIFICATION. Tazhin said he had raised with the Secretary Kazakhstan's concerns about the annual human rights certification required under the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act -- specifically, that Kazakhstan believes this is not the way to treat a strategic partner. The Secretary had promised to get back to him on the issue. The Ambassador responded that the State Department as a rule has always opposed such legislative provisions and has done so in Kazakhstan's case. He passed Tazhin a non-paper with the Department's view drawn from the talking points prepared for Secretary Rice's October 5 visit to Astana, and suggested that the Kazakhstani Embassy in

Washington work to make its case with Congress and with non-governmental organizations.

¶17. (C) DESIRE FOR PRESIDENT BUSH TO VISIT. Tazhin expressed Kazakhstan's strong interest in hosting a visit by President Bush before the end of his term. He admitted this might not be realistic, but reminded the Ambassador that in August he had heard rumors about the possibility of a "technical layover" for President Bush in Kazakhstan in conjunction with his trip to the Beijing Olympics. A presidential visit, Tazhin stressed, would be very important politically and strategically. He suggested that it could be done in conjunction with a trip to another country in the region, such as Afghanistan or India. Tazhin said he understands that a new U.S. president would be unlikely to visit Kazakhstan during his first year in office. He noted that Chinese President Hu Jintao visits every two years, and that there are frequent visits by the Russian leadership. The Ambassador promised to relay to Washington the request for a presidential visit.

¶18. (C) COMMENT: We fully agree with the value of a U.S. presidential visit to Kazakhstan, even in the final days of this Administration. Should President Bush make a farewell visit to U.S. troops in Afghanistan, we strongly recommend he make a short stop in Astana. END COMMENT.

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#### OTHER BUSINESS

¶19. (C) SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION. The Ambassador noted Astana would be hosting a meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) prime ministers on October 30 and inquired about the expected outcomes. Tazhin said that there would be nothing of great significance and no important decisions would be taken, especially since the issues for this meeting had been affirmed at the recent Bishkek ministerial. Further, the organization's general direction had been set by the SCO Summit in Dushanbe. He stressed to the Ambassador that despite Western concerns, the SCO is principally an economic organization -- though of course there are political aspects too. Tazhin expected that on the margins of the SCO meeting, Kazakhstan and China would sign agreements on water issues connected to trans-boundary rivers.

¶10. (C) AFGHANISTAN. Tazhin explained that Kazakhstan continues to be interested in playing a more active role in Afghanistan, including through its 2010 OSCE chairmanship. The Ambassador said that the United States welcomes additional assistance from all our partners, and asked why Prime Minister Masimov had canceled his planned late-October visit to Kabul. Tazhin replied that Nazarbayev had told Masimov that he had to stay in Kazakhstan to deal with the government's response to the global financial crisis. Masimov also had to postpone a planned trip to Malaysia. In any event, the Foreign Ministry had sent Masimov recommendations for his 2009 travel which included a trip to Afghanistan.

¶11. (C) IRAQ. The Ambassador handed Tazhin President Bush's letter to President Nazarbayev thanking him for Kazakhstan's troop contribution in Iraq. Clearly pleased, Tazhin promised to deliver it personally to Nazarbayev the next morning, October 30. He remarked that despite negative reporting in the mass media, significant progress had been made in Iraq, and the situation is much better than it had been a year or two ago.

¶12. (C) CTR AGREEMENT. Tazhin expressed satisfaction that President Nazarbayev had finally signed a decree on extending the Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) umbrella agreement, as a result of which the agreement will be sent to parliament for ratification. He explained that he had pressed for this action for some time, and that the hold up had resulted from

the fact that there was nothing in the original 1992 CTR agreement about a biological threat-reduction program. When such a program was established later and put under the agreement, nobody raised concerns within the Kazakhstani government. However, this year, the Kazakhstanis finally saw that this was a problem for them. The Ambassador noted that DOD/OSD CTR advisor Andy Weber had had productive October 21-25 meetings in Astana with senior-level officials. He said that the U.S. government strongly urged Kazakhstan to ratify the agreement by December 13, the 15th anniversary of the CTR program in Kazakhstan, and likewise urged expeditious movement on other pressing counter-proliferation issues.

HOAGLAND